

6th Sunday of Easter - Acts 7:55-end, 1 Peter 2:2-10, John 14:1-14

May I speak in the name Jesus, through the Holy Spirit and in the compassion and mercy of our great God. Amen.

Our buildings may be closed but the church is alive! Inspiring words!

[added after sermon so you know where the words came from – [YouTube video of 'UK Blessing'](#)]

There were no Christian buildings when Stephen saw a vision of God before he was killed in such a cruel and merciless way but one thing was sure, the Church was alive! Stephen was killed because he had declared the mighty works of God to the Jewish Council. He had **Jesus' courage and trust** in God. He knelt and said, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them' to prove it.

'O Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way forward?' We wholeheartedly join with Thomas in saying: 'O Lord, we do not know where you are going with this pandemic. How can we know the way forward?'

Courage and trust! Our buildings may be closed but the church is alive! Courage and trust!

Tearfund recently carried out a poll revealing that the previous 6% of UK population tuning in to a religious media programme has become 24% since the virus struck. Maybe the Mathematicians among us could work out the figures but, that is an explosion, not just a few more people. Is it just that technology enabled this? Or is something deeper happening? What were the headlines just before the pandemic struck? World-wide, ordinary people, in their millions, were standing up to voice their fears about corruption, injustice, the desecration of the environment, people's rights, persecution and poverty. World-wide people were no longer voiceless. And then? And then...the world was locked down and locked in because of a virus.

What did UK citizens do? They assumed the reptilian brain response. They bought toilet rolls! They panicked. They forgot the science and the rational but, thankfully, that is now behind us and we have each chosen to live respectfully and in awe of our neighbours and a gamut of front-line and key- workers.

Deep down, although our heads understand, our hearts don't want Lock down to be the **way** things are, we don't want it to **be our truth** and we certainly don't want it in **our lives** much longer. So, what do we want? Everything back to 'normal'? Maybe 'normal' will look quite different. Are we preparing for that? Jesus was preparing Thomas, Philip and the rest of his disciples for a different kind of normal when he said, '*I am the Way, the Truth and the Life*'.

Jesus was inviting the disciples to watch the **way** he lived. He asked them to listen when he prayed for **truth** so they could pray for truth with clear consciences and self-

sacrificial Love. He asked them to consider what **life**, in abundance, might look like so they, like him, could touch people's hearts as well as their minds. So, he said, *'Do not let your hearts be troubled...believe in God...In my Father's house there are many dwelling places...I go to prepare a place for YOU.'*

The way, the truth and the life are refreshing and foundational images to which generations of Christians have responded because they reveal the heart of Jesus to our hearts. We are invited, through these images, to seek Jesus' way, truth and life in order to feel the connectedness Jesus offers to all children, women and men to God and in the Spirit

Our buildings may be closed but the church is alive – this is Jesus' Way, Truth and Life for this moment in time. This is our Hope, not our downfall. A church alive is the place to find Jesus' transformative Mercy and Compassion, his Grace and Giving, his Hope and God's Loving Kindness.

Jesus' **Way** is Mercy and Compassion – take these into your heart. Feel them, pass them on.

Jesus' **Truth** is Grace and Giving – find out what this means for you, take it into your heart. Feel it and give, give, give to your Church, to Christian Aid, to St. Martins-in-the-Field or any other remarkable charitable organisation and to your family, friends and neighbours.

Jesus' **Life** brings Hope - even though our buildings may be closed the church is alive. Feel this and pass it on. And...what about God's Loving kindness? Yes, there is another gift waiting in the wings: as Jesus becomes our Way, our Truth and our Life we come to know God! ***'If you know me,' says Jesus, 'you will know my Father also. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him.'***

Courage and trust. Let us pray...

*Creator God, may every **breath** we take be for your glory,
may every footstep show you as our **way**,
that, trusting in your **presence** in this world,
we may, beyond this life, still be with you
where you are alive and reign
for ever and ever. Amen.*

[This Prayer is from C of E's Morning Prayer Liturgy following the reading of Psalm 139 on Tuesday 5th May 2020]